

The Post-Searchlight

By Brennan Leathers
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U.S. Rep. Sanford Bishop was the guest of honor as Bainbridge College hosted a musical and oratory convocation to mark February as Black History Month.

The event was held at the Charles H. Kirbo Regional Center at Bainbridge College and included tributes to the late civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. and the late jazz musician Louis Armstrong, both black men who helped shape American history.

Local leaders, students of all ages and other citizens were present to hear Bishop talk about how every person contributes to history and each have an opportunity to make the world a better place for others.

Bishop told student groups from the college, Bainbridge High School and Hutto Middle School about how the actions and events of his youth became the predictors and facilitators of the man and leader he was to become.

"What you are to be you're now becoming, young people," Bishop quoted his elementary school principal as saying.

Bishop said he believes in a higher power that placed humans on Earth for a specific purpose.

"Our challenge and obligation is to find out what our purpose is," Bishop said. "We are all equipped with special gifts and opportunities to enrich others' lives ... where ever you go, try and make it a little better because you were there."

Speaking of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, when Bishop was a young man in college and law school, he said he saw equal opportunity become real in the United States and in the South. Today's youth will grow up with the same chance to be president or to lead in other ways, a chance that wasn't always present, he said.

Tributes to King, Armstrong

Bainbridge College President Tom Wilkerson opened the event by reflecting on the life's work of Dr. King.

"He gave his energy and ultimately, his life, for a vision that was color-blind," Wilkerson said.

King placed value on the dignity and worth of humans, believed in freedom, hard work and

equal opportunity for all people, Wilkerson said.

Patricia Williams, president of the college's minority advising program, recited a speech King gave at Atlanta's Morehouse College in 1948 titled "The Value of Education," which contains one of his more famous quotations, "Intelligence plus character, that is the goal of education."

Charlie Strickland, a music instructor at Bainbridge College, gave a tribute to the jazz trumpeter and singer Louis Armstrong. Strickland played Armstrong's song "Summertime" on trumpet and sang the peaceful ballad "What a Wonderful World."